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ABSTRACT

A family literacy program was designed to bridge home and school literacy contexts by involving parents and children in developmentally appropriate and culturally sensitive literacy activities. The program's purpose was to enhance children's achievement and interest in reading and writing. The family program was a mirror image of a literature-based school program which included literacy centers in classrooms, teacher-modeled literature activities, and writing and reading appreciation periods called "WRAP (Writing and Reading Appreciation) Time" when children choose with whom to work and in which literacy activities to engage. The home program had similar features to the school program: engaging parents and children in storybook reading, recording words from the environment, writing journals, engaging in storytelling, and using "Highlights for Children" magazine as a home-school connection literacy material. Parent meetings were held monthly with children to share ideas, find out what parents and children wanted to learn, and to give them the opportunity to work and learn together. The program was carried out in an inner-city school district, with mostly African-American and Latino families. Children were in grades 1-3. Pre- and posttests were administered to determine growth in achievement and interest in reading. Achievement and motivation data demonstrated a significant difference in favor of the children in the family program. Success was attributed to the collaboration and shaping of the program by parents and teachers in an atmosphere of mutual respect. (Contains 20 references, and 3 tables and 1 figure of data. An appendix lists storybooks used for testing.) (Author/RS)

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The National Reading Research Center (NRRC) is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education to conduct research on reading and reading instruction. The NRRC is operated by a consortium of the University of Georgia and the University of Maryland College Park in collaboration with researchers at several institutions nationwide.

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Parent, Teacher, and Child Participation in a Collaborative Family Literacy Program: The Effects on Attitude, Motivation, and Literacy Achievement

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Abstract. *The Family Literacy Program described in this study was designed to bridge home and school literacy contexts by involving parents in developmentally appropriate and culturally sensitive literacy activities with their children. The purpose of the program was to enhance children's achievement and interest in reading and writing. The family program was a mirror image of a literature-based school program which included, literacy centers in classrooms, teacher-modeled literature activities, and writing and reading appreciation periods called WRAP Time when children choose whom to work with and in which literacy activities to engage. The home program had similar features to the school program: engaging parents and children in storybook reading, recording very own words from the environment, writing journals, engaging in storytelling, and the use of* Highlights for Children *magazine as a home-school connection literacy material. Parent meetings were held monthly with children to share ideas, find out what parents and children wanted to learn, and to give them the opportunity to work and learn together. The program was carried out in an inner-city school district, which included mostly African-American and Latino families. The children were in the first through third grades. Pre- and posttests were administered to determine growth in achievement and interest in reading. The achievement and motivation data demonstrated a significant difference in favor of the children in the family program. Success was attributed to the collaboration and shaping of the program by parents and teachers in an atmosphere of mutual respect.*

A child's success in school literacy programs often depends upon the experiences they have had at home prior to coming to school. Many children come to school reading and writing without formal instruction. The characteristics of these children and their homes have been investigated. This line of study has revealed home practices that could be successful in school settings, and information concerning the crucial role a family plays in the development of their children's literacy (Clark, 1984; Cochran-Smith, 1984; Morrow, 1993; Teale, 1984). Other similar research also points out that literacy experiences practiced in some homes are not congruent with literacy activities encountered in school. Despite the fact that

literacy behaviors are present in one form or another in most families, the type of events that some parents share with their children may have little influence on school success. Conversely, the kinds of literacy practiced in classrooms may have little meaning for those children or their parents (Auerbach, 1989; Heath, 1983; Morrow & Paratore, with Gaber, Harrison, & Tracey, 1995; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988).

With this conflict, it is difficult for some parents to integrate school-based literacy events into their homes. Therefore, we must learn about the literacy that occurs in homes from diverse cultural backgrounds and how these parents and children share literacy on a daily basis. We need to explore how such events can serve school learning. Rather than approaching parents who speak languages other than English and those who have not acquired mainstream literacy skills from a deficit point of view, we need to identify and build first upon the strengths they possess from their cultural backgrounds. We must respect and understand cultures in which no books exist, but in which story-telling, for example, is a strong part of the culture and an important literacy behavior, as well as cultures in which print is a dominant feature. According to Delgado-Gaitan (1990), parents with both high and low levels of education recognize the importance of a positive home literacy environment. Parents with less education, however, need to be informed about community resources and shown how they can be role models for their children. In her research, Delgado-Gaitan (1987) found that parents who participated in school activities and family literacy programs realized that they were an important link in their children's education. She also found that the parents who did not participate did not see the activities as important and felt the teacher was in charge when their children were at school. When parents from diverse backgrounds are helped to communicate with school personnel, they can collaborate with teachers to contribute to children's growth (Casanova, 1987; Chavkin, & Williams, 1993). If we do not attend to the home when we plan literacy programs, whatever strategies we design for the school will never be completely successful. Therefore, family literacy programs are necessary for helping parents understand how important they are in the literacy development of their children. We need to help parents realize that they do have skills to share with their children from their own cultures, and to empower them with new skills that will enhance their understanding of literacy development. It is possible to provide programs that are sensitive to diverse cultures by using the resources already within the family, and by providing additional strategies for parents to help their children. Most importantly, for programs to be successful they must include a certain amount of reciprocity, equality, and respect between those involved (Hale, 1982).

The purpose for this study was to heighten the awareness of parents, children, and teachers concerning the importance of the role they all play together in the literacy development of children. We were interested in the effects of this family literacy program on the enhancement of achievement, and motivating the desire to read and write on the part of children. We hoped to enhance parent self-confidence about

their ability to help. The program was designed to be sensitive to diverse cultures by using resources already within the family such as storytelling and print in the environment, and by empowering parents with new skills to provide them with a greater understanding of literacy development. Teachers provided collaborative activities that formed a link between home and school. Parent input into the program was an important concern. The study specifically sought to determine what the impact of the family literacy program had on: (a) children's literacy achievement at school; (b) children's interest in reading and writing based on teachers' ratings and their participation in literacy activities at home; (c) children's and adults' interest in working together at home; and (d) the attitudes of teachers, children, and parents toward the family literacy program.

Method

Subjects

The subjects in the study were children from two first ($N = 18$), two second ($N = 18$), and two third grades ($N = 18$), which were randomly assigned to one experimental and one control group. Nine children were randomly selected from each classroom for a total of 54 children, with 27 in the experimental group and 27 in the control. The study took place in an urban public school district where many are considered "at risk," with 98% of the children from minority backgrounds (African American and Latino) and 2% Caucasian.

Treatment

The study was carried out for an entire school year. Subjects in the experimental group received a home and school-based program and subjects in the control group received the school-based program only.

The family literacy program, entitled The Family WRAP Program (Writing and Reading Appreciation for Parents and Pupils), was designed to provide a mirror image of a program we organized in the school the year before. The school program was called the WRAP Program (Writing and Reading Appreciation Program)[1] and was designed to promote interest in reading and writing. We wanted to motivate children to read voluntarily for pleasure and for information. We wanted children to be able to approach literacy as a social activity, by engaging in reading and writing with children and adults, and seeking the help of others to achieve goals.

Description of the School WRAP Program. This literature-based reading and writing program included classroom literacy centers with a variety of literacy activities available for children. Materials found in the classroom centers were open-faced bookshelves for featured books, and regular bookshelves that held five to eight books per child at three to four grade levels, representing varied genres of children's literature. The books could be checked out to take home from the classroom library. Pillows, rugs, stuffed animals, and rocking chairs added

[1] Gloria Lotenberger, a first grade ESL teacher in Baldwin school where this program took place, thought of the term WRAP Time for the school program.

comfort to the area. Manipulatives such as feltboards with story characters and taped stories with headsets were available for the children's use. There was an "Authors' Spot" equipped with paper, blank booklets, and writing utensils.

The teacher modeled activities to create interest in books by reading aloud and telling stories using techniques such as chalk talks, felt stories, puppet stories, and so forth. Children engaged in story retelling and rewriting, creating original stories, and sharing books read. Activities emphasized in the program included: journal writing, collecting Very Own Words, and learning elements of story structure, styles of authors and illustrators, and literal and interpretive discussions related to stories. *Highlights for Children* magazines were used regularly in all classrooms as one of the home-school connective literacy materials.[1]

WRAP (Writing and Reading Appreciation) Time occurred three to five times a week and provided children with the opportunity to choose from a variety of literacy activities. Children could choose to read a book or the *Highlights for Children* magazine, read to a friend, listen to a taped story, tell a story with the feltboard, write in their journal, and so forth. The 30 to 40 min WRAP Time gave students choices within a structure. For instance, children could choose to work alone or with others. They were expected to complete tasks and present them.

The elements of the School WRAP Program that provided the same activities in school that would happen at home included: (1) Teachers reading stories to the class; (2) teachers engaging students in storytelling using techniques such as puppets, and props; (3) journal writing about daily activities; (4) recording and practicing "Very Own Words" from print in the environment; (5) featuring sections of the magazine *Highlights for Children*; and (6) WRAP Time, a period set aside for children to engage in reading and writing activities in social settings with their peers, the teacher, and parents.

Description of the Family WRAP Program. Prior to designing the program, we had interviewed the teachers, parents, and children about what they believed should be included in a family program and what goals they hoped would be achieved. In general, they were interested in many of the same goals that teachers had for children. Parents valued achievement for their children, and wanted to know how to help them succeed. They wanted to work with the teachers to help their children become independent learners. The results were similar to research carried out by others (Chavkin & Williams, 1993; Neuman, Hagedorn, Celano, & Daly, 1995). Children wanted the help of their parents so they could do better in school, and teachers believed that parents should be partners in the literacy development of their children. The purpose of Family WRAP Program was to provide a collaborative effort between home and school. Therefore, the family program had similar goals as the school program. One way that we believed this could be done was to create a mirror image of the school program designed to motivate children to read and write voluntarily for pleasure

[1] The *Highlights* magazines in this project were donated by *Highlights for Children*.

and for information. We wanted children to approach literacy as a social activity, by engaging in reading and writing with family members. Many of the same materials provided for the school program were also provided for parents. We wanted a home program that was pleasurable and familiar for children. As parents introduced activities, children could relate to them since they had been done in school. If parents had limited literacy ability or did not speak English, children could help with the activities for the home program because they were familiar with them from their participation at school. Teachers initiated the program for home, and the home program supported what was happening in school. Parent input was considered important in shaping the program as it progressed, but to begin, we felt we needed a framework.

Materials and activities for the Parent WRAP Program. Each parent received a shopping bag of materials that contained items similar to those used in the school WRAP Program as follows: (1) A storyboard for storytelling, (2) two spiral notebooks for journal writing, (3) a file box with blank 3×5 cards for recording "Very Own Words", (4) a *Highlights for Children* magazine, and (5) a Parent WRAP Program Handbook.

The *Family WRAP Program* consisted of the following activities:

1. **Reading to and with your child** often, listening to your child read, reading together side by side, talking about what was read.

2. **Storytelling** about family experiences, telling stories from books and original stories. Using techniques such as puppets, and props for story telling as well. Parents received storyboards made of corrugated cardboard. The triangular-shaped material had a piece of felt on one side and the other was designed for roll stories. The storyboard also served as a puppet stage. Each parent received story characters made of felt, stick puppets with accompanying storybooks to use with their storyboard. They were also given roll paper (white shelving paper from the supermarket) to create roll stories. Children could write and draw their own stories or retell stories they had read by making felt figures, stick puppets, or roll stories. The parent packet also included a book of chalktalks—simple stories that are read and drawn at the same time—and a book of tips for storytelling.

3. **Writing in Journals** together in the two spiral notebooks provided. Parents and children could write stories, write things they did each day, make shopping lists, draw pictures, copy writing from a book, or write about how it felt to work with your child or parent.

4. **Record "Very Own Words"** in the file box provided containing blank 3×5 cards. Children select the words from print within the home, community, or from school work. Make children aware of print all around them by pointing it out inside and outside of your home. Read mail, road signs, store signs, and directions on medicine. Children and parents are to read the "Very Own Words," copy them, and use them when writing stories or writing in their journals.

5. **The *Highlights for Children* magazine** was given to each child by his or her classroom teacher to take home to their family. Another copy of the same magazine remained in school

to work with them. A *loose-leaf notebook* that included lessons for using the magazine was provided for parents and teachers. This was one of the literacy materials in common in the home and school. Lessons for using the *Highlights* were given to the teachers to use in school first, so that the children would recognize the activities when doing them at home with their parents. Children could show parents with limited literacy ability what to do with *Highlights* since they had worked with them at school. An excellent feature of the magazine is that there is something for everyone, all interests and abilities. It was nonthreatening since it was not like school materials, and many of its stories and activities included content about different cultural backgrounds. The magazine was sent home with the child instead of using a subscription through the mail, since many of the families we worked with moved frequently, and oftentimes many different people live in one household. If the magazine was mailed to the home, we could not be sure that the child in the program would receive it.

6. **Participate in WRAP Time** periods at school set aside for children to read and write independently of the teacher in social settings with others.

In addition we asked parents to do the following:

1. Find a place for the family program materials in your home so children can use them easily.

2. Attend monthly group meetings with other parents and occasional meetings on a one-to-one basis with a mentor. The mentor was a University student pursuing certification in education. At our first monthly meeting with parents, some of the materials were distributed with demonstrations of how to use them. We modified new activities at subsequent meetings, but always from the list we just described. Parents were given the opportunity to share things they had done with their children. They also discussed what they might like to have added to the program or deleted. Their input was valued. At the end of the meeting, the children and parents did activities together. Children also told what they had done with their parents.

3. Keep records of activities done on the sheets provided and share what you do with the group.

The Parent Handbook, entitled *The Family WRAP TIME PROGRAM*, was part of the program material mentioned earlier. This handbook was a guide explaining the important role that parents play in the literacy development of their child. The book included some suggestions about parents working with children and guidelines for the WRAP Program.

The contents of the booklet included a section entitled, "*Materials For Parents*," which we described earlier, and "*Guidelines for the Family WRAP Program*." The next section in the book was called "*Things To Look For And Have In Your Home*." The list included such items as scissors, tape, pencils, paper, space for children to work, magazines, newspapers, and children's books. The last two sections were lists of *Things To Do With Your Child At Home* such as read or look at books together, tell stories, watch TV together and talk about what you watched, let your child see you reading books, magazines and newspapers, and make your child aware of print in the

home. Next was a list of *Things To Do With Your Child Outside Your Home*, such as: visit the library and take out books, go on outings together to the supermarket, post office, or zoo, and note the print all around. The next section in the book was called "*Things To Do and Say To Make Your Child Feel Good About Themselves, About You, and Reading and Writing.*" Here we suggest that parents answer children's questions about reading and writing, reward reading and writing activities with words such as, "What nice work you do," "I'm happy to see you are reading or writing," or "Can I help you?", display your child's work at home, attend parent conferences at school, attend school if your child is in a play, and attend other parent events.

Measurements

Several measurements were administered, some individually and some as a group. Measures were used to determine literacy achievement, motivation or interest in reading and writing, and increased reading at home and with adults. Interview and anecdotal data determined parents', teachers', and children's attitudes toward the family literacy program. This data also provided us with stories about the families we worked with to illustrate how participation affected them.

To determine children's growth in achievement, the following measures were used: a Story Retelling Test, a Story Rewriting Test, a Probed Comprehension Test, and the California Test of Basic Skills. Teachers rated children to determine increased interest and motivation for reading and writing. Finally, children were interviewed to determine increased reading at home and with adults.

Story Retelling and Rewriting tests were used since they are holistic measures of comprehension which demonstrate retention of facts, as well as the ability to construct meaning by retelling text. These tests tap literal knowledge of stories, specific elements of story structure, and story sequencing. For the Story Retelling and Story Rewriting tests, two different storybooks were used: one for the pretest and one for the posttest (see Appendix A for titles). These were chosen for quality of plot structure, including strongly delineated characters, definite setting, clear theme, obvious plot episodes, and definite resolution. The stories were similar in number of pages and words. Testing books were selected with attention to research on children's preferences in books (Monson & Sebesta, 1991). Research assistants administered the Story Retelling tests on an individual basis. Story Rewriting tests were administered to whole groups by classroom teachers. When taking the story retelling and rewriting tests, children listen to a story that is read to them. They are asked to retell it or rewrite it as if they are doing it for a friend who had never before heard the story. No prompts are given with the rewriting test. In the oral retelling, which is tape recorded, prompts are limited to "Then what happened?" or "What comes next?" Both written and oral retellings are evaluated for the inclusion of story structure elements: setting, theme, plot episodes, and resolution. A child received credit for partial recall or for understanding the gist of a story event (Pellegrini & Galda, 1982; Thorndyke, 1977). The scorers observed se-

quence by comparing the order of events in the child's retelling with that in the original by constructing a meaningful presentation. The interrater reliability of the scoring scheme (roughly 90%) and the overall validity of the measures have been established in previous investigations with children from diverse backgrounds (Morrow, 1992; Morrow & Smith, 1990). For this study, seven coders scored six protocols with 92% agreement for story retelling and 96% for story rewriting.

Probed Recall Comprehension tests were administered individually by research assistants after reading a story to the child (testing book titles are in Appendix A). The test included eight traditional comprehension questions focusing on detail, cause and effect, inference, and making critical judgments, plus eight questions focusing on story structure: setting, theme, plot episodes, and resolution. Research assistants read the questions and recorded children's answers. This instrument was reliable in the range of 92% in previous research with children from similar diverse backgrounds (Morrow, O'Connor, & Smith, 1990). In this study, six coders scored the five pre- and posttests with 92% agreement.

The Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (California Testing Bureau, 1981), a standardized instrument, had been administered by the district in April of the year before the study and was again administered in April of the year in which the study was completed. The reading subtest was included in the results reported here.

Teacher rating of children's ability and interest in reading and writing was accomplished by asking teachers to rate the reading and writing ability and interest of the children in the study on a scale from 1 to 5. One was the lowest rating and 5 the highest. This measure was a way of determining increased achievement and motivation or interest in reading and writing.

After-school activities and family involvement information was collected through interviews with the children about their after-school activities with and without family members. This was to determine if the program had an effect on children's increased interest or motivation to read at home and to select to do it with a grown up. It was also administered to see if adult family members involved in the program were choosing to work with the children.

Attitudes toward the family literacy program were determined through interviews with teachers, parents, and children. *Anecdotal data* along with interviews allowed us to collect stories about some of the families with whom we worked, and to find the effect that participation had on them.

Results

The quantitative measures were analyzed using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with pretest scores as the covariate, treatment condition (experimental or control) as the main effect of interest, and posttest scores as the dependent variable.

Literacy Achievement and Motivation or Interest

Table 1 presents the pre- and posttest means and standard deviations for the literacy

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations for Literacy Achievement Measures

	Group							
	Family Group				Control Group			
	Posttest	(SD)	Posttest*	(SD)	Posttest	(SD)	Posttest*	(SD)
Story Retelling	9.89	(3.08)	11.08	(3.02)	7.67	(2.92)	8.95	(2.63)
Story Rewriting	5.74	(3.31)	9.06	(2.97)	2.66	(2.65)	70	(2.95)
Probed Comprehension	19.67	(3.75)	21.31	(3.56)	17.93	(4.91)	19.77	(4.29)
Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills Reading Section	50.63	(17.37)	60.33	(16.23)	39.69	(15.79)	47.42	(14.47)
Teacher Rating of Reading and Writing Ability	2.81	(0.95)	3.92	(0.82)	2.09	(1.10)	2.70	(0.96)
Teacher Rating of Reading and Writing Interest	2.62	(0.96)	4.12	(0.66)	2.91	(1.13)	2.91	(0.93)

Note. Posttest means are adjusted for pretest scores. The two groups consist of three classrooms each. Nine children were randomly selected from each room and tested or evaluated on pre- and posttests. Means and standard deviations reported here are based on $n = 54$.

* Family Group Posttest scores are significantly different ($p < .05$) from posttest scores in the Control Group.

and interest measures. The ANCOVA for the total score on the Story Retelling measure, $F(1,53) = 20.17$, $p < .001$, showed that the experimental group scored significantly better than the control. The ANCOVA for the total score on the Story Rewriting test, $F(1,53) = 41.71$, $p < .001$, indicated that the experimental group scored significantly better than the control group. The ANCOVA for the Probed Recall Comprehension Test, $F(1,53) = 14.99$, $p < .001$ demonstrated that the experimental group scored significantly better than the control on this measure. On the California Test of Basic skills, the experimental group did better than the control with an ANCOVA of $F(1,53) = 27.15$, $p < .001$. Finally, the results of the teacher ratings of children's ability and interest in reading and writing found that the teachers rated children in the experimental group as increasing more in their reading and writing ability, $F(1,53) = 50.58$, $p < .001$, and their reading and writing interest, $F(1,53) = 33.23$, $p < .001$, at the end of the treatment period.

After School Activities and Family Involvement

Children were interviewed to collect information dealing with their after school activities

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations Concerning Activities Children Choose to Do After School

	Group							
	Family Group				Control Group			
	Pretest	(*SD*)	Posttest[a]	(*SD*)	Pretest	(*SD*)	Posttest[a]	(*SD*)
Read or look at a book	1.30	(0.53)	1.87	(0.43)	1.36	(0.58)	1.59	(0.51)
Have someone read to you	1.23	(0.63)	1.63	(0.67)	1.38	(0.68)	0.95	(0.58)
Do something with a grown-up	1.33	(0.61)	1.80	(0.55)	1.58	(0.62)	1.44	(0.72)
Read or look at a magazine	1.17	(0.45)	1.83	(0.53)	1.35	(0.63)	1.32	(0.69)

Note. Posttest means were adjusted for pretest scores. The two groups consist of three classrooms each. Nine children were randomly selected from each room and given pre and post interviews. Means and standard deviations are based on $n = 54$.

[a] Family Group Posttest scores are significantly different ($p < .05$) from posttest scores in the Control Group.

and family activities. Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for a multiple choice measure to determine after school activities of students in the family and control groups. In the ANCOVA for this measure, it was found that those in the family group reported that they read or looked at books more than children in the control group, $F(1,53) = 6.71$, $p < .02$; had someone read to them more often, $F(1,53) = 11.22$, $p < .002$; did something with a grown up more often, $F(1,53) = 5.89$, $p < .02$; and read or looked at a magazine more frequently, $F(1,53) = 10.53$, $p < .005$.

In another multiple choice measure, we were interested in finding out if adults were choosing to read and write with their children at home and if they were participating in other activities with their children more often than parents in the control group. Table 3 presents this data. The parents in the family group did read and write more often with their children, $F(1,53) = 13.35$, $p < .005$, and chose to do more things with them in general, $F(1,53) = 30.70$, $p < .001$, than parents in the control group.

Interview Data

Child interview. Children were asked what they liked about the family program and how they will help their children with school when they are grown up. The following is pooled data from the questions asked.

What do you like about the Family READ *Program?*

- When I need help someone is there for me. I don't feel lonely

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations Concerning Parents Working with Children

	Group							
	Family Group				Control Group			
	Pretest	(SD)	Posttest*	(SD)	Pretest	(SD)	Posttest*	(SD)
Read with my child	0.27	(0.45)	0.81	(0.80)	0.35	(0.49)	0.40	(0.50)
Did an activity with my child	0.27	(0.42)	0.83	(0.38)	0.27	(0.45)	0.23	(0.43)

Note. Posttest means were adjusted for pretest scores. The two groups consist of three classrooms. Nine children were randomly selected from each room and their parents were interviewed for this data with pre and post interviews. Means and standard deviations are based on $n = 54$.

* Family Group Posttest scores are significantly different ($p < .05$) from posttest scores in the Control Group.

- When you grow up, you'll know how to help your kids
- It's nice to work with parents. Sometimes you don't think they love you, but when they work with you, then you know they do
- I might not know how to read if they didn't help me
- It's fun
- Lots of people help you, grandmas, grandpas, aunts, uncles, big brothers, moms, dads, mom's boyfriend, dad's girlfriend.

When you are a parent, how will you help your child?

- I'll read stories to them
- I'll buy them books to read
- I'll help them write and spell
- I'll hold their hand
- I'll do the same things my parents do
- I'll go to school to find out how I can help
- I'll help them make up stories
- I'll help them pronounce words

Teacher interviews. Teachers were asked what they thought the benefits of the Family Program were with respect to the parents and children participating. The following represents pooled data from their responses.

What have parents been involved in since the Family Program?

- Reading to their children
- Encouraging their children to read
- Having children retell stories
- Taking trips to the library
- Working with *Highlights* magazine
- Writing in journals with children
- Participating in WRAP Time

How have you helped to get them involved?

- I meet with parents to explain the elements in the program
- I've encouraged them to read and write with their children
- I keep parents informed as to what we are learning

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- I invite parents to read to children in school, participate in WRAP Time, and help with writing conferences

Parent interview. Parents were asked what they thought was the value of the Family Program. The following is pooled data.

What did you learn from participating in the Family Program?

- It is fun to work with your child. It is quality time together
- It is exciting, and you get a wonderful feeling
- My child looks forward to working with me
- I learned how to help my child and that I could
- We learn from each other and share ideas
- I learned about ways of helping, like telling stories with felt and drawing stories, that I didn't know about
- I learned to be more patient with my child
- My child taught me many things
- I learned that doing fun things is important and that my child will learn that way too
- When parents help, children will know that school is important
- Sometimes when we work together, my child teaches me, since I don't speak English very well

Anecdotal Data

Stories from mentors, who met with the parents on a one-to-one basis, concerning the interactions that were occurring between parents and children and the kinds of activities parents were participating in with their children were recorded. These stories illustrate what we have learned about these families. We learned about some of their problems and concerns, how they are helping their children as a result of the program, and their attitudes about the program. These stories illustrate the beginnings of success.

Tameka and Kim. Tameka is from Trinidad and came to the United States when she was 16. She is married and has three children. Tameka never finished high school, but completed a GED. Her husband presses clothing in a cleaning store. Tameka is ambitious; she works the night shift as an aide at a medical center and has a part-time job in a supermarket. She hopes to become a nurse and has been attending a community college. She drops in and out of school depending on finances. She is intelligent with potential for success. But with responsibilities for childcare and the necessity to work, it is difficult for her to reach her goal. Tameka confided to a teacher that she is abused by her husband. He will do so in front of the children who have called "911" for help. The father has been arrested for abuse. Tameka has stated that she will not allow her children to have boyfriends until they finish their education. She wants them all to go to college.

Tameka has been very enthusiastic about the program. She never misses a meeting, and always completes several activities on the checklist. Tameka lacks self-confidence and is always concerned about doing a good enough job. One week, she was only able to do one or two of the activities on the checklist. She mentioned that maybe she should drop out of the program because she was not holding up her end of the bargain. We assured her that she was doing more than enough and that whatever

she could accomplish was better than not doing any of the activities at all. Tameka has always helped her children with their homework. She says she has learned new ideas from the program, such as collecting "Very Own Words" from print in the home environment and community. Journal writing is another activity that she had not participated in with her youngster prior to the family literacy program. One of the entries in Tameka's journal was a biography of her daughter Kim, and Kim had written one for her mother. There had been a biography of Ray Charles in an issue of *Highlights* that was featured by the teachers at school and was a plan for the parents as well. After reading the story, parents and children were asked to write biographies of each other. Figure 1 presents Kim's biography of her mother Tameka. Tameka was proud of her daughter's writing and shared it at the parent meeting.

Brenda is the college student who works with Tameka. They have become close confidantes. Tameka told her, "This program helps me to remember to work with my kids when things get so busy or not so good at home and I would forget. I'm learning new ideas I wouldn't have thought of before. You make me have more confidence that I am a good mom who does good things with my children. I want them to grow up like you and go to college."

"The meetings with Tameka were gratifying," said Brenda, Tameka's mentor. "She was always cooperative. But the meetings were a challenge." Tameka's 2-year-old attended all of them, which caused problems. Tara is a handful; she cannot sit still for a minute, and gets into everything. It was difficult to share accomplishments and carry on conversations about potential activities. However, Tameka could not come to the meetings if she did not bring Tara, since she had no available childcare.

Harriet and Keisha. The following is a story about one of our grandparents who participated in the program.

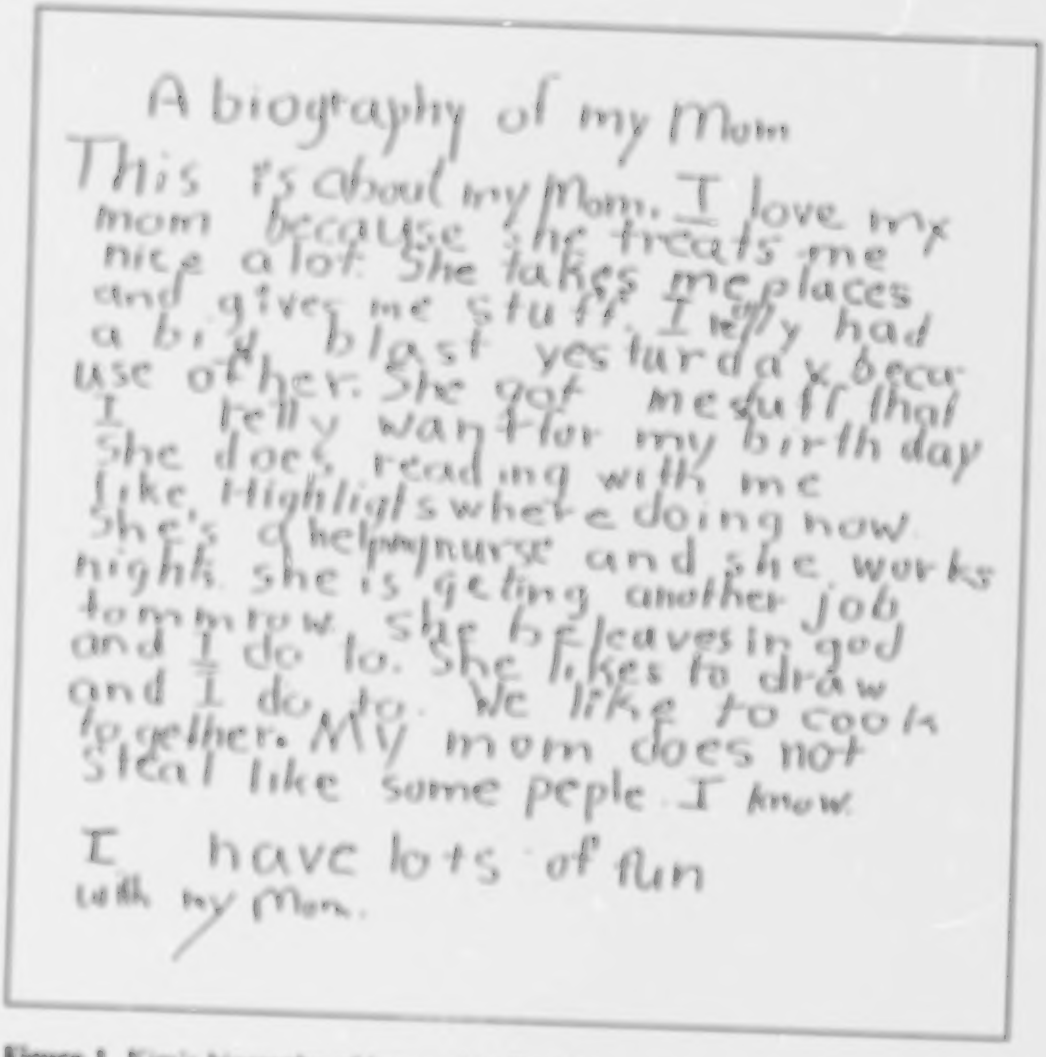
Harriet walked into the school library. Although this was our second meeting, I could tell from the expression on her face that she was hesitant about joining us, so I went to greet her. We found a place for her to sit, next to a parent she knew. I fixed her a plate of cookies and a cup of juice, and I handed her a new *Highlights for Children* magazine to preview.

Keisha, Harriet's grandchild, was with her. We had activities and refreshments for the children in the school cafeteria, supervised by my college students. Keisha went to join the rest of the children during the parent meeting.

Harriet has three grandchildren in her custody. She is in her 40s and raising the children alone. She is on welfare and has trouble supporting the family. Keisha is not doing well in school and Harriet is very concerned.

We began the meeting with a discussion of what each parent or grandparent had done with their child since last we met. The parents had a list of suggested activities to choose from, such as working in the *Highlights* magazine, noticing printed words at home or in the community, writing in their journals together, and so forth.

Each parent mentioned one activity worked on with his or her child. When it was Harriet's turn, she said, "Well, I tried these



A biography of my Mom

This is about my Mom. I love my mom because she treats me nice a lot. She takes me places and gives me stuff. I reely had a big blast yesturday becaus other. She got me stuff that I relly want for my birth day she does reading with me like Highlights where doing now she's a helpnurse and she works nighk she is geting another job tommrow she bf leaves in god and I do to. She likes to draw and I do to. We like to cook togelher. MY mom does not steal like some peple I know.

I have lots of fun with my Mom.

Figure 1. Kim's biography of her mother Tameka.

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Highlights, but them *stories are* too long to read." I realized that Harriet was probably having trouble reading them. We talked about features in the magazine which she could use with her grandchild, such as finding the *Hidden Pictures* or doing the *Matching Pictures*. These required limited literacy skills.

A week later, I happened to meet Harriet in the hallway of the school. I asked how her meetings were going with Linda. Linda is a college student who worked with Harriet on a one-to-one basis. Harriet was very animated, much different than at the parent meeting. She said, "Oh our meetins' are goin' fine. Linda showed me these little stories I can read to Keisha in the *Highlights*, and we love them. That Linda is such a nice girl."

When talking to Linda, Harriet's mentor, I told her how enthused her parent was about the section of *Highlights* Linda had introduced to her. Linda said, "I showed her the *Dear Highlights* letters, sent in by children who are responding to articles in the magazine." In the *Dear Highlights* section, the pages of the magazine are divided into three columns and each *Dear Highlights* entry is about one-third of a column long. Harriet referred to Dear Highlights as "stories" and felt comfortable reading them to her grandchild. She was delighted with her success, and we were pleased that we found something for her to share with Keisha.

In a very short time, Harriet and Linda formed a close relationship. They respected and cared about each other. When it was parent-teacher conference time in the school, Harriet asked Linda to come to the meeting with her. Harriet was nervous about what she would hear concerning Keisha's school work and was not sure she would understand everything. Linda sought permission from Keisha's teacher, who was more than happy to have her accompany Harriet. After the conference, Linda helped Harriet understand the ways in which she could help Keisha. As a result of the family literacy program, Harriet was not as fearful about coming to school as she had been; she was willing to share her concerns, ask questions, and seek help. Harriet commented, "I always wanted to help my grandchildren, but I didn't know how. I thought the teacher knows more than me and I really don't know what to do. Now I have someone to ask about how to help. I can do the things she shows me, and I feel I'm really helping Keisha now." This seems like a small success story, but to us it represents an important achievement. Harriet was feeling more confident about her ability to help her grandchild and also about her own literacy ability. She was not only helping Keisha, but she was practicing her own literacy skills as well.

Rinaldo and Gloria. Our next story is about the only father in the program, Rinaldo Alvarez. Mr. Alvarez is a single parent, who has raised Gloria alone since she was a baby. He has never discussed Gloria's mother. He works as a mechanic, and completed 2 years of high school. He seems to be very concerned about his daughter and suggests that he wants to help her as much as he can. He is a quiet man who does not show much expression in his face. Mr. Alvarez comes to every meeting. He forgets to bring his materials, and looks a little distraught when we discuss the activities participated in between parent and child. Ariadas is the college student who is acting as Rinaldo's

mentor. She said, "Although he has good intentions, by the time he gets home from work and prepares dinner for Gloria and himself, he says he is too tired to do much with her." Gloria is quiet like her dad. She does not do well in school. Her father gets exasperated when she does not cooperate when he tries to help her. She often gets angry with him and then ignores him.

Rinaldo said he had not been doing any of the activities with Gloria because "she won't cooperate and I don't have the patience." We went over the list, and when we got to the one about looking for environmental print, his eyes lit up and he exclaimed, "Oh yeah, we did that when we went to church Sunday. I showed Gloria all the print. When we got home she asked for the word Bible to put on a 'Very Own Word' card." We also found out that Gloria had been doing chalk talk stories in her journal, but Rinaldo thought they were "just drawing," as he said, not reading or writing. We explained that when Gloria did the chalk talks, she had to read them to draw the pictures. We found Mr. Alvarez to be very interested in his child, but lacking in self-confidence. He did things with Gloria, but gave himself little credit for his accomplishments.

Concluding Remarks Concerning These Anecdotes

Our grandmother Harriet knew she had limited literacy ability and felt she could not be of help because of that. Tameka also lacked confidence, possibly because of an abusive home situation. She tried to do as much as possible for her children to assure them a better future than her own situation. No matter how much she did, however, she never felt it was enough. Rinaldo had a sense of hopelessness. He tried to help Gloria, but did not feel successful. He was surprised to find that we felt he was doing good things with her and she was responding. This gave him the initiative to continue.

Each parent described is different, and yet each one is similar. They all lacked confidence and they did not realize how important they were to their children, that they could help, and that what they were doing was extremely productive. In a very short time, we have been able to let them know how successful they have been, and have given them incentive to continue.

Discussion

The study was quite successful in revealing differences in literacy achievement on the part of the children in the Family Literacy Program. Results also indicated that children reported reading more often in their free time and reading with adults. Reading magazines was something that children in the family group spent more time doing than those in the control group. This is not surprising since they were provided with the *Highlights for Children* magazine. The Family WRAP Program was a collaborative effort. It seems as if this collaboration between home and school doing similar programs could have been the reason for its success. The teachers were an integral part of the project. They did activities in school similar to those that we taught the parents to do at home. Children repeated the activities at home

and enlisted their parents to work with them. In some cases the children helped their parents. Regardless whether the child or parent was directing the activity, the interaction was the important part.

From interview data with children, they expressed that they enjoyed working with their parents at school meetings and at home, and that they were learning. Parents also talked about enjoying the work they were doing with their children and learning how to help. Some also said that their own literacy skills were improving. Many parents have expressed that they were learning new ideas. We have rich samples of parent-child journal entries, large collections of "Very Own Words," displays of chalk talks, and roll stories shared at our meetings. Parents said that they felt more comfortable about coming to school and participating, and had more self-confidence about being able to help their children. They expressed appreciation to those carrying out the program for the materials and the attention they were receiving. They demonstrated pride in accomplishment of tasks completed. We found parents more willing to share their ideas for adding to the program, ask questions, and express their concerns. Parents were enthused about the program and eager to participate and help their children. They were fascinated by the activities and viewed them as things they could do and feel good about. Many said that they never felt they knew how to help their children, nor did they think they could; now they realized how important they were in taking an active role in the literacy development of their children. Some also made a point of saying that they did not like to do traditional homework with their children, but they found the Family Program activities enjoyable and fun, and therefore they participated.

Teachers admitted that they had not realized how important such a program was in bringing parents, students, and teachers closer together in working toward the literacy development of children. They indicated that they found that many of their students were beginning to show greater interest in reading and writing and that some were also improving in their literacy skills.

Implications for Family Literacy Programs

In conclusion, we will review the factors in the program we believe to have brought about the successful outcomes. These have implications for designing other family literacy efforts.

The success of the program, we feel, is due to the COLLABORATIVE effort of parents, teachers, and children working together with mutual respect for each other. In addition, the activities for the home were FUN but also EDUCATIONAL, and they were SENSITIVE TO THE INTERESTS OF THE PARENTS, AND THE DIVERSITY OF THEIR BACKGROUNDS, for example: (1) storytelling about family experiences, from books, and telling stories passed down through the oral tradition; (2) collecting "Very Own Words" generated from the home and community; and (3) the use of the magazine *Highlights for Children* which was NONTHREATENING, NOT SCHOOL-LIKE, AND COULD BE USED BY THOSE WITH DIFFERENT LITERACY ABILITIES AND CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS. Finally, the STRONG CONNECTION OF THE SCHOOL AND HOME PROGRAM, we believe, was a

major component for encouraging participation and the success.

Author Note. Gratitude is extended to the parents, teachers, children, administrators in the New Brunswick Public School district where the study took place. I also thank the Rutgers University students who acted as mentors to parents.

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Appendix A

Storybooks Used for Testing

Oral Retelling Test

Pretest: Flory, J. (1980). *The bear on the doorstep*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Posttest: Keller, H. (1990). *Cromwell's glasses*. New York: Greenwillow Books.

Written Retelling Test

Pretest: Bourgeois, P. (1986). *Franklin in the dark*. New York: Scholastic.

Posttest: Zolotow, C. (1962). *Mr. Rabbit and the lovely present*. New York: Harper & Row.

Probed Comprehension Test

Pretest: Fujikawa, G. (1980). *Jenny learns a lesson*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap.

Posttest: Hurd, R. (1980). *Under the lemon tree*. Boston: Little Brown.

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